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SUBJECT: IMPROVING OPERATIONAL COORDINATION WITH PAK-MIL
ALONG THE BORDER

Classified By: DCM Christopher Dell for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Combined Task Force Currahee leadership held a Border Flag Meeting with Pakistani Military (Pak-Mil) officials in southern Paktika province as part of an ongoing process to enhance dialogue between the forces along the border, build trust and improve the flow of information and coordination. Pak-Mil highlighted the negative consequences arising from Coalition cross-border raids and suggested that these operations "should be avoided," though they also commended recent tactical cooperation in disrupting "miscreant" activity. Pak-Mil and CTF Currahee commanders agreed to plan coordinated operations along the border to further restrict enemy movement and infiltration. End Summary.

PRE-EMPTING CONVERSATIONS IN A CRISIS

¶2. (C) CTF Currahee leadership, including the Brigade Commander, 2-506 IN Battalion Commander, and POLAD, participated in an October 13 Border Flag Meeting (BFM) at Forward Operating Base Lilley in Paktika province with Pakistani Military (Pak-Mil) Brigadier General Ali Sadiq (HQ, 116 BDE), LTC Dahir (Commander, 33d Punjab BN) and LTC Maqbool (Commander, 20th AQ Regiment).

¶3. (SBU) CTF Currahee Commander opened the meeting, commending Pak-Mil for its operational cooperation, which led to a string of recent tactical successes in interdicting cross-border enemy movements and attacks. He stressed the need to continue building trust between Pak-Mil and Coalition Forces (CF) with additional refinement of communications procedures so that "the first conversation we have is not when we're in a crisis." CTF Currahee Commander also acknowledged Pak-Mil's ongoing military operations in Swat and Bajaur, the positive impacts of these campaigns in degrading enemy capabilities and the sacrifices of Pakistani soldiers. (NOTE: BG Sadiq stated that 1368 Pakistani soldiers died in FATA fighting. END NOTE.)

¶4. (SBU) BG Sadiq expressed gratitude for the opportunity to meet and continue dialogue between Pak-Mil and CF. He noted that he arrived in the theater of operations only two months ago, but that cross-border coordination and communication had

improved markedly in this period. He emphasized the common enemy faced by both Pak-Mil and CF and stressed the need for continued collaboration to further build confidence and effectiveness in disrupting "miscreant" activities. BG Sadiq asked that the Coalition understand Pak-Mil limitations - particularly related to surveillance and intelligence collection assets along the border.

"AVOID" COALITION CROSS-BORDER ATTACKS

15. (C) The Pak-Mil General contended that recent CF cross-border raids and other operations inflamed local populace sentiments, undermined Pak-Mil efforts in the region and "should be avoided." He requested that the Coalition respect the "sanctity of the border." CTF Currahee Commander assured Pak-Mil that his forces will continue to follow strict rules of engagement and will not impinge on the sovereignty of Pakistan. He further observed that the militants, goal is to drive a wedge between Pak-Mil and CF partnership, which both sides must resist through continued close communication and coordination.

16. (C) BG Sadiq pointed out that, across the Brigade sector, they conduct roughly 60 patrols during the day and about 30 at night. He gently pressed to see more CF patrols along the border and suggested that they could be coordinated with Pak-Mil patrols to more effectively cover gaps and restrict enemy movement. CTF Currahee Commander expressed support for the idea of coordinated operations and issued guidance on the spot for maneuver commanders to seize this initiative. He

highlighted, however, Coalition economy of force and offered that this limitation can be partly offset by introducing greater numbers of Afghan National Army (ANA) into the area. On this point, CTF Currahee Commander also recommended that - at the next BFM - he bring relevant ANA leadership, who, ultimately, will be responsible for building the long-term coordination relationship with Pak-Mil through continued dialogue and mechanisms such as Border Coordination Centers (BCC).

RECENT TACTICAL COOPERATION "MARVELOUS"

17. (C) CTF Currahee Commander and BG Sadiq confirmed monthly BFMs (more as needed) underpinned by the daily communication and coordination already taking place between CF at Forward Operating Base Lilley and Pak-Mil stationed along the border. LTC Dahir raved that this coordination, especially over the last two weeks, was "marvelous." He complained, however, that there were occasional instances when it appeared that CF sought to "kill flies with a hammer." He argued that massive, long-distance artillery strikes were potentially counter-productive (threat of collateral damage) and that better effects might be achieved through direct small unit engagement. CTF Currahee Commander explained that, given terrain and manpower constraints, launching a patrol to engage the enemy was not always possible. Furthermore, counterfires serve the important purpose of defeating rockets set on timers, a common militant technique.

18. (SBU) BG Sadiq commented that besides conducting military operations in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), education and development are the long term keys to success in fighting militancy. He contended that the Waziri tribal members in his area of responsibility are "tired of the miscreants" and their use of the borderlands as a rear staging area. LTC Maqbool, a Pashtun originally from Peshawar, claimed that he had never seen local tribesmen so eager for education and greater economic opportunity. He held that USAID should begin to carry out assistance activities in the region, which would dramatically and positively influence perceptions. POLAD noted ongoing USG efforts to devise a comprehensive FATA development strategy, which would complement COIN efforts on the Afghan side of the

border.

TANGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS NOTED

¶9. (C) After several cancelled Border Flag meetings with Pak-Mil in southern Paktika, the renewed dialogue is a positive step forward. Even more encouraging, however, is the tangible improvement in cross-border communication and coordination between Pak-Mil and Coalition Forces, which has led to a number of successful operations resulting in numerous enemy killed or captured. U.S. ground commanders repeatedly remarked on the apparent strategic shift in Pak-Mil approach. Conducting coordinated patrols on either side of the frontier and ensuring that the ANA (or, eventually, Afghan Border Police) are an integral part of the border security plan should serve to further impeded militants, though the area is so vast, CF and Afghan forces so few and the border so porous that the "miscreants" will undoubtedly continue to employ Pakistani borderlands as a rear-base to carry out operations in Afghanistan.

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